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The Emergent Male Grocery Shopper: An Identification of Male Supermarket Shopper Types.

Abstract

Grocery shopping has long been considered to be the responsibility of the female spouse. However, modern social and demographic movements are causing changes to traditional gender roles. Considerable growth in the representation of men engaging in supermarket shopping is reported. Yet, while regular food shopping by men is on the rise, the examination of male shoppers remains limited. A growing body of research has explored shopper segments identified in retail channels. This is the first paper to identify and interpret groups of male supermarket shoppers within the Australian Supermarket retail environment. Accordingly, it seeks to contribute to, and extend the knowledge of retail consumer behaviour and market segmentation theory. A questionnaire survey was utilised to gather data from one hundred and forty male grocery shoppers. Data reduction, employing factor analyses, cluster analysis and cluster-case tables provided the mechanism to develop five distinct cohorts, which includes the identification of a new type not reported in earlier studies of male supermarket shoppers. This study contends that male supermarket shoppers are not homogeneous, but that different groups exist. This study has implications for consumer behaviour disciplines in relation to supermarket shopping. It also has commercial implications for food retail management.

Keywords: Topology, Supermarket Retailing., Male Shoppers, Australia.

Introduction

Male grocery shopping behaviour is a rich topic for popular media, however, the topic now holds emerging academic interest (Iacobucci and Ostrom 1993; Mazumdar and Papatla 1995; Dholakia 1999; Beynon, Moutinho and Veloutsou 2010; Helgesen and Nettet 2010).

Ongoing social and demographic movements are causing changes to traditional gender roles, household duties and contributions (Piper and Capella 1993; Dholakia, Pedersen and Hikmet 1995; Bhatti and Srivastava 2003). Accordingly, men are either voluntarily or by necessity, engaging in supermarket shopping (Davis and Bell 1991; Dholakia, Pedersen *et al.* 1995; Dholakia 1999). Such considerable growth in the representation of male grocery shoppers means retail executives require a greater understanding of this group's shopping behaviours. Consequently, the following research question emerges.

RQ1: Do different behavioural cohorts of male shoppers exist in the context of supermarket shopping?

This research which includes the development and identification of distinct male grocery shopper cohorts, contributes to consumer segmentation theory and supermarket retailing strategy. It also provides a platform for future research into male consumer choice behaviour at the supermarket. This may, in turn, explain and predict shopping behaviour, under certain conditions, and make market-place adaptations with increased certainty and with improved generalisability. Although researchers have behaviourally and psycho-graphically profiled consumers who patronise discount department stores, online shopping, purchase leisure products, clothing, apparel and groceries, in many cases they have overlooked male shoppers. This research addresses this short coming, identifies five types of male grocery shopper, including a new cohort.

Literature Review

Male Supermarket Shopping

In their 1993 study, Piper and Capella examined the attitudes and demographics of regular male grocery shoppers in North America. They suggest male grocery shoppers are likely to be employed in white-collar, professional occupations, with high levels of education and income. Polegato and Zaichkowsky (1994) examined the strategies adopted by men in regard to the extent of planning in supermarket shopping. They concluded that older men plan more than young men and men spent less time shopping than women. In regard to important supermarket characteristics, helpful assistants, friendly checkout operators and easy parking were not considered important to men (Polegato and Zaichkowsky 1994). Mazumdar and Papatla (1995) argued that men, in general, were price insensitive (Mazumdar and Papatla 1995; Reid and Brown 1996). Dholakia's 1999 study extended that of Piper and Capella (1993) in an attempt to further profile and identify the behaviour of male grocery shoppers. Dholakia's findings parallel those of earlier studies of male grocery shopper behaviour. A study by Williams (2002) examined the constructs of decision-making by men in the supermarket. It was identified men place less importance on product evaluative criteria (Williams 2002). These findings tend to support other empirical evidence that men rarely comparison shop (Mazumdar and Papatla 1995; Reid and Brown 1996; Underhill 1999; Otnes and McGrath 2001).

Shopper Topologies

Although male shopping behaviour in the context of supermarket shopping has received some academic attention, in recent times there has been little effort to model these behaviours in order to form distinct profiles. It is contended an opportunity exists to examine shopper profiles (Kau, Tang and Ghose 2003; Kureshi, Sood and Koshy 2008). As companies find it increasingly necessary to segment fragmented markets, life style and psychographic segmentation studies have been employed for developing retail target marketing strategies.

Yet, few studies considered topologies of male shopper types in relation to food shopping behaviour. This research seeks to redress this oversight.

One of the first documented attempts to profile specific groups of shoppers was Stone's (1954) study of 150 Chicago housewives. His study and analysis illustrated four shopper types; economic, personalising, ethical and apathetic (Stone 1954). Darden and Ashton (1975) explored shopper profiles further, establishing seven types of female supermarket shopper. Lesser and Hughes (1986) approached a topology of shopper types. Their study examined both male and female shoppers, across twelve states and a variety of retail channels. They identified seven types of shopper, including active and inactive shoppers, service, traditional, dedicated, price and transitional shoppers. Similar to previous studies, linkages were noted.

Other general segmentation studies identified shopper types based on levels of involvement, identifying such shopper types as smart and economic/efficient (Smith and Carsky 1996). Online shopping, that presented simplifiers, bargain shoppers, routine followers and traditional shoppers (Hamilton 2000; Kau, Tang *et al.* 2003). Sports and clothing store studies have identified shopper profiles, such as purposive patrons, purposive non-patron and browser (Kureshi, Sood *et al.* 2008). Retailer brand studies have presented ultra-loyal and less-attached (Merrilees and Miler 2009). Mail catalogue shoppers identifying smart shoppers, economic/efficient shoppers, assortment shoppers (Reynolds 1974; Korganonkar 1984; Jasper and Lan 1992; Eastlick and Feinberg 1999).

Method

A questionnaire survey was employed as the data collection tool. An appropriate sized sample of 140 male respondents, who reported primarily or equally undertaking the grocery-shopping task, was drawn from four Australian supermarkets located within suburbs presenting significantly different socio-economic demographics (Hoyer 1984; Leong 1993). A probability collection procedure of every fifth shopper was implemented. The choice of supermarkets was determined as the two market leaders, representing 72 per cent market share (IBIS World Industry Report 2009). The developed questionnaire was pre-tested on 25 male undergraduate students, all of whom advised they had experience with grocery shopping. Seventy three Likert-type scale items were employed to measure eight important constructs relating to supermarket shopper behaviour, including; responsibility, enjoyment, store characteristics, comparison shopping, price sensitivity, catalogue usage, planning and product evaluative criteria. A further six items recorded demographic data, including age, education, income, marital status, employment and home ownership.

A series of five-point, Likert-type scales were adapted from the literature. Shopping responsibility was measured with five scale items (Piron 2002). Level of enjoyment was operationalised by six items (Dawson, Bloch and Ridgeway 1990; Urbany, Dickson and Kalapurakal 1996; Otnes and McGrath 2001). Thirty items relating to important store characteristics, including staffing, service and range, were employed (Zeithaml 1985; Donegan 1986; Polegato and Zaichowsky 1994). Comparison shopping was measured with three (Putrevu and Ratchford 1997). A five item scale measured the price sensitivity and consciousness (Lichtenstein, Ridgeway and Netemeyer 1993). Five items captured the use of catalogues (Putrevu and Ratchford 1997). Nine scale items measured the tendency of male shoppers to purchase unplanned products (Rook and Fisher 1995). To measure the extent men reference product evaluative criteria, ten Likert-type scale items were adapted from previous academic studies (Donthu and Cherian 1994; Peracchio and Tybout 1996; Urbany, Dickson *et al.* 1996; Putrevu and Ratchford 1997; Meyers-Levy and Tybout 1998).

Analysis

In order to identify specific homogeneous cohorts of male shopper, the seventy three scale items were reduced to eight summated constructs with factor analysis, prior to employing a cluster analysis. The eight constructs descriptions are presented below (**Table 1**). Sample sizes of between 140 and 160 are sufficient for factor analysis if solutions have several high-loading marker variables, above 0.60 (Pallant 2007). This study draws from a sample size of 140 male grocery shoppers and tests confirmed factor loadings in all but three cases, to be over 0.60.

Construct	Description
Shopping Responsibility	Five items related to identifying the male shoppers' opinion of who should be responsible for grocery shopping, and whether they share the responsibility.
Shopping Enjoyment	Six items that identified if male grocery shoppers enjoy the grocery-shopping activity.
Store Characteristics	Thirty items that identified the level of importance placed on ten specific store characteristics by male shoppers (e.g. helpful staff, efficient checkouts, easy parking, being in-stock of specials).
Comparison Shopping	Five items that identified the male shoppers' propensity to shop around and to visit other supermarkets on a weekly basis.
Price Sensitivity	Three items that identified how often male shoppers checked prices on products before purchase.
Catalogue Usage	Five items that identified how often male grocery shoppers referenced store catalogues before shopping
Unplanned Purchasing	Nine items that identified the level of impulse buying (unplanned purchasing) by male shoppers during grocery shopping.
Evaluative Criteria Referenced	Ten items that identified the level of importance placed on product evaluative criteria by male grocery shoppers (e.g. price, freshness, brand, special discounts).

Table 1: Construct Descriptions

To verify that the selected items were suitable for reduction, two checks were performed on the output. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) output was reviewed to ensure value was over 0.60 (Pallant 2007) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was checked to ensure significance levels of 0.05 or less (Coakes 2006; Pallant 2007). K-means clustering was employed because of the ability to pre-set the number of clusters to be formed based on the hypotheses or an agglomeration schedule (Pallant 2007). The Agglomeration Schedule (**Table 2**) shows how the cases are clustered together at each stage of the cluster analysis.

Agglomeration Schedule

Stage	Cluster Combined		Coefficients	Stage Cluster First Appears		Next Stage
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	
1	2	6	764.000	0	0	3
2	4	7	2179.000	0	0	4
3	2	3	5249.667	1	0	6
4	1	4	10244.000	0	2	5
5	1	5	21356.667	4	0	6
6	1	2	57174.571	5	3	7
7	1	8	293739.375	6	0	0

Table 2: Agglomeration Schedule

Similar to previous research techniques, the Ward method was employed (Norusis 2004; Coakes 2006). To identify the number of clusters to be formed, the literature states that one should see a sudden drop in the similarity coefficient. The stage before the sudden change indicates the optimal stopping point for merging clusters (Coakes 2006). As demonstrated in the agglomeration schedule table above, there is a sudden change in the distance coefficients

after Stage 2 (2179.000), jumping to Stage 3 (5249.667). Five stages (3 to 7) remain after this identified increase and therefore, a five-cluster solution is established and is presented in the Dendrogram below (**Table 3**).

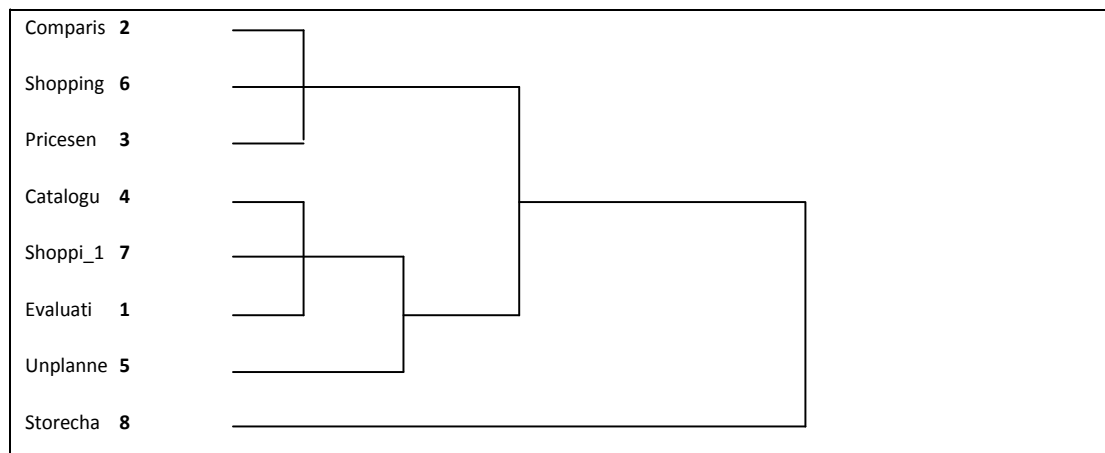


Table 3: Hierarchical Dendrogram Cluster Groups

Referencing the Squared Euclidean Distance, the case processing summary identified that 97.1% of the male sample (136 respondents) was effectively captured within the five identified clusters.

Results and Discussion

Interpretation involved a review of segmentation and topology literature. Accordingly, this research developed five distinct clusters of male supermarket shoppers, which included a new cohort, and are described below.

Cluster 1 – Budget-Conscious

This cohort represented over thirty percent of the sample and demonstrated a strong association toward price checking and shopping around for value. They were considered middle class, aged of between 26 – 45 years. Their income was considered low, in relation to the rest of the sample. This shopper will compare prices and visit other supermarkets in order to save money. They will buy lower quality, generic brands to reduce expenditure. This shopper is sensitive to price and promotions. They will not purchase product on impulse, possibly due to financial constraints. Although they share responsibility for shopping, they do not enjoy the task, suggesting they undertake the task in order control household expenditure.

Cluster 2 - Controlled

This shopper represented only 3.9 per cent of the sample. These men demonstrated a clear intention towards planning and complex decision-making. Respondents enjoyed the task, were not sensitive to price and did not make impulse purchases. Men in this group were under the age of 45 years, earned the highest salaries and were employed in mostly professional roles. It is suggested men in this small group approached the task in a purposive manner, not because of financial limitations, but as a direct result of their demeanour.

Cluster 3 – Egocentric

Representing 26 per cent, this group most closely aligned itself to the anecdotal version of the male shopper, in that they placed little importance on store characteristics and lacked involvement in the activity. They purchased unplanned items and ‘treats’ for themselves, possibly to compensate for time spent shopping. Men in this group were older and most claimed to be married. They were also the least educated. Their earnings, while high, were possibly related to age and length of employment. Compensatory purchasing may related to high discretionary income and lack of enjoyment and interest in the activity.

Cluster 4 – Equitable

Unlike Controlled and Egocentric, this group considered supermarket shopping to be a joint responsibility; hence they took an equitable approach to family role sharing. They enjoyed the activity and accordingly, they considered product attributes importantly, compared prices during selection and used catalogues to improve product knowledge and aid in planning. This group was identified as the youngest of all the groups, with almost half the group reported to be 18 – 35 years. Corresponding to their age, their income was considered the lowest of all groups, with 38 per cent earning less than A\$45,000 per year.

Cluster 5 – Convenience

This final group of male supermarket shoppers shared many of the features of the previous four shopper types. However, unlike the previous four segments, this group considered important store characteristics, such as efficient staffing, car parking, convenient locations and trading time. This cluster represented over 16 per cent of the sample and was described as 26 – 36 years of age, well educated and earning an average income of A\$60,812.

Conclusion

Although researchers have behaviourally and psycho-graphically profiled consumers who patronise retail channels, in many cases they have overlooked male shoppers. This research seeks to redress this short coming by identifying five types of male supermarket shopper which includes a new cohort. Four of the identified male supermarket shopper types in this study demonstrated similar behavioural characteristics to profiles identified in earlier works. The most dominant cluster, 'Budget-Conscious' closely paralleled other types of shoppers, including 'Economic' (Stone 1954), 'Economy Specialist' (Herrman and Warland 1990), 'Price' (Williams, Painter and Nicholas 1978), 'Financially Restricted' (Shorney and Carney 1988) and 'Price Shopper' (Lesser and Hughes 1986). The 'Egocentric' type could be aligned with 'Apathetic', 'Inactive', 'Hurrier' or 'Grab n' Go' shoppers (Darden and Ashton 1975; Williams, Painter et al. 1978; Shorney and Carney 1988; Otnes and McGrath 2001). The cluster labelled 'Controlled' demonstrated similar behaviours to the 'Demanding' shopper (Darden and Ashton 1975), the 'Complete Consumer' (Herrman and Warland 1990), the 'Involved' shopper (Williams, Painter et al. 1978) and the 'Active' shopper (Lesser and Hughes 1986). The 'Convenience' shopper is most often identified within consumer segmentation studies (Lesser and Hughes 1986).

The fifth cohort, 'Equitable', is not reported in early studies and this is possibly related to their demographics. This emergent shopper is identified as a young, newly married man, who has recently completed, or is in the progress of completing, his education and at the beginning of his career. Based on social constructionist theory, it is contended that this male shoppers' behaviour has been shaped through contemporary institutional and social mores (West and Zimmerman 1987; Andreyeva, Blumenthal, Schwartz, Long and Brownell 2008). Simply, their approach to supermarket shopping has been refined and negotiated in the everyday practices through which individuals interact (Pleck 1987; Woodruffe-Burton, Eccles and Elliott 2002). It is contended these new male supermarket shoppers have grown up in families where they observed their fathers understating non-traditional family roles and have accordingly adopted these practices and behaviours. It is posited that this segment will continue to grow, while the older more traditional 'Egocentric' male shopper diminishes. Accordingly, retailers are encouraged to pursue this new segment.

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